

The God of Materialism and Heavenly Treasure

by Roger Hertzler

The sermon emphasizes the importance of investing in heavenly treasures through acts of love and charity, rather than succumbing to materialism and earthly concerns.

Duration: 57:50

Scripture: Matthew 6:19, Luke 12:33, Hebrews 11:10, Hebrews 11:26

Topics: "Materialism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the importance of recognizing and seizing opportunities to help those in need. He shares a story of a man who becomes increasingly excited about the doors of opportunity that God has opened for him to give and make a difference. However, his excitement is dampened when his wife informs him that they have run out of money. Undeterred, the man suggests selling something to continue helping others. The preacher emphasizes the need to avoid laziness and overspending, and instead, to work diligently and manage resources wisely in order to have the means to give. Jesus teaches that giving to the poor and showing love to others in His name is the way to transfer money from one place to another.

Transcript

New bits of old stuff, you know, the medical case, some of them, some of that, there was, you know, if you see a lot of shoppers, this means that we're together, to chat together in pubs for you and I planned telling them, you know, allow us to pull out and try to make some effort, there's some investment weight, something to get, and a little bit about this thing of compounds will grow and how we stay here, we're, uh, just, how this works, the entire plan, it was key to get it, you didn't get any crying back there, it's fine, some of them don't feel that a lot, you know, they need to, too, so I'll try to, uh, but if you can't, they were for the here and now, that was all they cared about, just give me my paycheck more, the message on peer pressure is we're people to you, John, and I

didn't snitch on them, and so, for once, out of the heart of the key, God, you know, if, if everyone had been to our batter wallet, man, we'd have some of this, this, you have made that lease on the crud, we'd, and we need to talk about this here, about religion group, and talk about religious, and make all the money, and, the, the reason I'm sorry, this good news that I'm going to be sharing with you about the kingdom of God is about the retirement plan that this king offers, did you know that our king, Jesus, offers a retirement plan, or maybe we call it an investment opportunity, maybe that would be a better way to put it, it's an

investment opportunity, if you know anything about investments, it's different than spending money, when you invest money, you're thinking long term, you're

thinking for the future, you're thinking not for just the here and now, well, our king offers this investment opportunity, and he says here, in Matthew 6, verse 21, he says, lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, I trust that we believe heaven is a real place, well, Jesus says you can lay up investments and treasures in this place called heaven, and it's not gone when you lay up treasures in heaven, it will still be there, just like that retirement plan was still there, it was there long term, it was there far into the future, hopefully if they did it right, and if the economy stayed sound, and everything else happened like what was expected to happen, well, Jesus said you can lay up treasures in this place called heaven, and it's secure, now that's a big issue, do you know that,

security is a big issue, today there are many people who are worried about security of their investments, there's a lot of people, I deal with them as an accountant, I see a lot of people worried about the things that they buy, they want to invest in something that's going to last, years ago there was this company called Enron, huge energy company that wanted to grow, and they wanted to grow fast, they started buying up all these different companies around them, growing and growing, they had all these employees, they kept hiring on new people, and as they were growing, they hired some accountants to do some work for them, they hired some accountants to report to the shareholders, here's what how good we're doing, how much money we're making, well these accountants weren't doing a

particularly good job, now this is a big accounting firm, when I went to work as an accountant, years ago there were six firms that were called the big six, the biggest of the big six accounting firms was called Arthur Anderson, and the story I'm telling you is the story that not only crippled Arthur Anderson, but actually drove them right out of business, Arthur Anderson was the accountant for this company called Enron, and Enron had all their people, all their employees, and everybody else that could talk into investing money into this company, they put this money into the company, and many people relying on this company called Enron to make them wealthy, to make them financially secure in the future, well finally these accounting problems came out, that they were hiding and burying,

and had all this debt that nobody wanted to know about, and they put it, I don't know how they did it, some kind of, they called it off balance sheet debt, which I don't even understand, I hope the big boys do, but they were doing things that they shouldn't have been doing, it was illegal, and when it all finally came crashing down, Enron was out of business, and all these people that had staked their financial security on Enron, they were out in the cold, they had nothing to show for all their hard work, and they weren't very happy, and I think that's part of the reason Arthur Anderson is no longer an accounting firm, is because of that huge mistake, and all the people that suffered because of it, and so people don't want to invest in an Enron, people want to avoid that, they hear those

horror stories and they say, if I'm going to make investments, I want to invest in something that's going to be there when I'm done, after the time, you know, whatever that time period is, if it's 10 years, 20 years, whatever that time period is I'm looking at, I want it to still be there for me, that's what an investment is, it's supposed to hold value for you.

Well, one lady came up with an idea how she could do it and stay out of the Enron problem, her name was Martha Stewart, one of the richest ladies in America. She was investing, she had lots of money, she had made with her I think a TV show, she was investing in all these different companies, but she decided to get

into this thing called insider trading.

Insider trading happens when you get some information that nobody else knows about it. You see, as soon as it's public information, everybody knows about it, and either the stock price goes up or it goes down. Well, she wanted to avoid what everybody else was doing, or she wanted to avoid the danger that they were engaged in and they didn't know about it.

So she made friends somehow with one of the inside people in this company, and she had made some investments in this company through their stock offering. Well, he gave her a call one day and says, hey, Martha, you better sell the stock because it's going to go down in value. And so she did.

And lo and behold, it did go down in value. And she breathes a sigh of relief and says, wow, that was close. I could have lost a lot of money.

Well, the government found out about this and started asking questions. Why did you sell? I mean, that seems a little fishy that you sold right at that time. See, that was information she wasn't supposed to have.

She was supposed to wait until everyone else. Somehow it was done illegally. But then she made another mistake.

She lied about it and said, I didn't really get it. I really didn't know. And really, she didn't know.

Well, she ended up spending some time in jail because of that. Now, insider information is not necessarily always illegal if you get it in the proper channels. In fact, if you and I are part of the kingdom of God, we can do insider investing.

Did you know that? Did you know we have inside information that no one else has? Or at least if they listened, they'd know it. But most of them are not listening. If you go to Wall Street today, you'll see people rushing around trading stocks and bonds and different investments.

And they don't know whether this stuff's going up or going down. Oh, if they could just get their hands on tomorrow's newspaper, for instance, and know whether this thing's going up or down, that would just make their day. But they can't.

They don't know what's going to happen on tomorrow. Neither do we as far as here on this earth. But if we read this book, you know what we find out? It says this entire earth is going to melt with fervent heat.

That means Wall Street's included. And all the stocks that's traded on Wall Street, it's all going down in value. We know that.

And we can look at all these people rushing around trying to make these good investments, and we can tell them, look, we know beyond a shadow of a doubt they're going down in value. We know for sure because we have inside information. We talk to somebody who knows the future, and he talks to us through his word.

Isn't that exciting as a member of the child, a child of God? We can trade. We can we can trade in and invest in utter security because we know the future in a way that nonmembers of this kingdom, they don't know the people who are not members of the kingdom. God, they don't know about other people have got into this thing called foreign investing.

They say, I'm not sure the United States economy is very sound. And so they send their money over to Japan or Germany or China, or maybe they are already in another country, maybe Mexico or Zimbabwe or one of these company countries that historically has had a high inflation rate and all the money that they have latest. They don't know it's going to go down in value and it's gone down value over and over again.

It's just lost its value. And so they say, we're going to send our money up to the United States and invest in dollars because it holds its value. It's called foreign investing.

People here in the United States do it all the time. You know, they try to diversify and send money overseas to some country that they think is more sound. Well, did you know that in the kingdom of God we can do foreign investing at its best? You see, it's one thing to send our money overseas somewhere.

But what happens if the whole world burns up? Did you know Japan and Germany and China are going to burn up with it? Investing in another country here on this earth doesn't help us at all in that scenario. But what about investing in heaven? Now, isn't that foreign investing at its best? You see, when this earth melts with fervent heat, any investments we've made in heaven, we still have. We can still have those things.

This is what treasures in heaven is all about. We can transfer our money, this green stuff we carry around with us. We can actually transfer it to heaven and it will be secure for us.

And maybe you ask the question, well, how can we get in on this wonderful opportunity that we have as children of God? How can we get in on this thing called treasures in heaven? What are the mechanics? How do we transfer money from here to there? Well, Jesus tells us how in a couple of different places. Luke chapter 12, Matthew chapter 6. I'll be sharing some of these verses and the references with you. But basically, Jesus says the way to do it is by going out in my name and showing love to people by giving to the poor.

Giving alms, he calls it. Or giving to the poor, he calls it. Or giving to charity.

Sometimes it depends on the translation you use. But giving in the name of Jesus. Giving to the poor.

Giving to the needs of this world. And by the way, there are so many opportunities in this. I mean, if you look around.

Maybe not here in America. Maybe you see how everybody looks pretty well fed here. Everybody's got a copy of the Bible.

In fact, they probably have three or four copies of the Bible sitting on their television set. Closed with dust on them. But if you get to many countries in this world, and probably even certain parts of the United States, there are truly poor people.

And if you go to them in the name of Jesus, with the right motives, with the right heart, and help those people, Jesus says you are laying up treasure in heaven. And it's not an expense. You know what the difference is between an expense and an investment? An expense is gone once you spend it.

Once you lay the money out. You go to a power company and give them \$100 for your power bill. You're not going to see that \$100 again.

It's going to be gone. It's going to be eaten up with the electric that you consume. But if you go to a bank and say, I'm going to put this in a savings account, that's not an expense.

That's an investment. You can go back to that bank and get it out. Hopefully it's a good bank.

Well, laying up treasure in heaven is not an expense. It's an investment. We can still get it.

It's still there. God is guarding it for us. God even says back in the Old Testament Proverbs, He says, Whoso hath pity on the poor, lendeth to the Lord.

I don't know if any of you have ever done any money lending before, but you know, when you loan money to somebody, there's a risk. No matter how financially sound they are, there's at least some risk that they're not going to pay you back. But do you think there's any risk that if you loan money to the Lord, that He's not going to pay you back? Do you think He's going to default? Do you think He's going to call you up and say, Sorry, I can't make the payment this month.

I don't think God's going to do that. I think God can very well, when we loan Him money, I think He's going to guard it. I think He's going to take care of it for us.

This is heavenly investment. This is heavenly treasure. And this is the part of the good news of the kingdom of God.

Maybe some of you have asked questions already. Maybe there's other ways I can lay up treasure in heaven. The Bible speaks of this.

Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, Jesus said. That's a command. Well, how can I do that? Maybe there's other ways.

Raising your family. Prayer. Bible reading.

Witnessing to the lost. Would those activities maybe be treasure in heaven as well? Laying up treasure in heaven. I think it's very possible they are.

But did you know the only one the Bible mentions is giving? That's the only one. Giving to the poor. Giving to charity.

That's the only one that the Bible calls treasure in heaven. Perhaps those other activities would be too. I kind of think they might qualify.

But for sure we know that treasure in heaven is giving to the poor. Now as wonderful as this thing is, there are some pitfalls. There are some dangers in this thing of laying up treasure in heaven.

There are things that Satan has come along and he's put up barrier after barrier trying to stop this thing from happening. You know why? Because Satan knows the power of having treasure in heaven. He knows what happens to your heart when you lay up treasure in heaven.

You know what Jesus said happens to your heart? He says your heart will follow your treasure. Your heart will be in heaven if your treasure is in heaven. Satan also knows the testimony of this is.

When suddenly someone who has been living a selfish life suddenly becomes generous and starts sharing with others out of his abundance. Even out of his poverty. Even if all he's got left is two mites like

that widow.

And she gives up her two mites for the sake of God. People look at that and say, wow, something has changed. Something is different.

Satan knows the potential. He knows the attraction that that is to the lost. He also knows that there's an eternal destiny at stake.

Now this is really serious. Because, you know, in Matthew 25, Jesus said there's going to be a division. And the division is going to be between the sheep and the goats.

And you know what the criteria that Jesus said? You're going to be on the right. You're going to be on the left. He said, enter down to the joy of my Lord.

Why? Why these and not these? Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these, you have done it unto me. I was hungry and you gave me meat. I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.

I was a stranger and you took me in naked and you clothed me. And you, you didn't clothe me. You didn't feed me.

You didn't, you know, take me in as a stranger. This is a serious issue. So you can see why Satan would want to set up some of these barriers in our lives.

So what are the barriers? Let's talk about some of the barriers that Satan wants to set up to keep us from engaging in this activity of laying up treasure in heaven. What does Satan want to do to us? What pitfalls, what stumbling blocks has he set up? Let me go through some of these rather quickly. And then there's one of them we really want to touch on.

But first of all, is this problem of laziness. The Old Testament talks a lot about slothfulness, laziness, just an unwillingness to get out of bed and go to work. An unwillingness to really apply ourselves, to really be diligent.

It's called laziness or slothfulness. Well, if that's a problem, turn to Proverbs 6.6 or Ephesians 4.28 and it says there that you should go and work. You should go to the ant and you should take heed what the ant does and follow the example of the ant and how he works.

And he has a future-oriented mind. He's not looking for just the here and now. He's looking for the future.

And that motivates that ant to go and work and apply himself. Or Ephesians 4.28 where it says, let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labor. Why? So that he may have to give.

What's another problem? Another stumbling block. Laziness is the first one. The second one is overspending.

Or we could call it waste. Or we could call it mismanagement. Somebody goes out there and they have a good job and they work hard and they make a good deal of money.

But they spend it all through mismanagement. Spending it all on themselves. Luxury living.

Spending everything they have on their own needs. They have nothing left over to lay up anywhere. On earth, in heaven, nowhere.

They have no money left over because of overspending. Through waste. Through just squandering what they've earned.

That's the second one. What's another stumbling block to laying up treasure in heaven? First one was laziness. Second one was overspending.

The third one is a lack of love. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul writes, If I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, but I do it without love, it profits me nothing. What a tragedy.

When we could have had treasure in heaven and we come up with nothing. Doing it without love. You know, that's the first commandment.

Loving God with all our heart. All our soul. All our mind.

All our strength. And the second is likened to it. Loving our neighbor as ourself.

And to somehow mechanically go through the motions without that love for God first of all and love for our neighbor secondly. Paul says it profits us nothing. The fourth stumbling block is a wrong motivation.

A motivation of the praise of men. In Matthew 6, Jesus said, Don't do your alms before men to be seen of them, because if you do it for that motive, all you want is the praise of men. He says you'll get no reward of your father which is in heaven.

No reward. How tragic. How sad.

No reward of your father which is in heaven. A wrong motivation. Doing it for the praise of men.

But he says if you do it in secret. Do it in secret with no thought of who is watching you. Then he says my father which is in heaven will reward you openly.

That's the fourth stumbling block. And the fifth stumbling block is the God of materialism. And if you look at your programs this weekend, that was the title that was given.

The God of materialism. The God of materialism is a huge stumbling block to laying up treasure in heaven. Because the God of materialism comes along and says, You know what? You've worked hard.

And you know what? You've cut back on your own personal expenses. And you've got this extra money that you can do something with. And the God of materialism says, I've got an idea.

Why not lay up some of these treasures here on this earth? I mean, after all, over there is the stock market. And you can make money in that. People have done it.

Over here is some real estate. And real estate is going up in value. In fact, real estate never goes down in value.

You didn't know that. That's what the God of materialism will tell you. And the God of materialism will say, just lay up some treasure here on earth.

Put it in a savings account. Just let it pile up as long as you can possibly let it pile. Get as rich as you possibly can.

Maybe that will even make you more valuable to God's kingdom. Although most of the time, the God of materialism just uses, all he has to do is appeal to our own self and our own, you know, what we want out of it. That's most of the time what he's going to appeal to.

And you know what he tells us? The God of materialism? He tells us, I'm going to give you, now listen to this list. I'm going to give you security. I'm going to give you fulfillment.

I'm going to give you purpose. I'm going to give you influence. I'm going to give you health, happiness, love, power.

These are the things that the God of materialism wants to give you. He's offering you. He's saying, hey, if you can save, you know, pile up your money long enough, I mean, you know, you become a millionaire, maybe even a billionaire.

I mean, who knows? But you'll have all these things, security, fulfillment, purpose, etc. But you know, when Jesus was here, he made a quite a statement. He said these words, you cannot serve God and mammon.

And that word mammon means wealth or possessions or money. You cannot serve God and money. He wasn't saying you cannot serve God and Satan, although that is true.

He wasn't saying you cannot serve God and Baal or Ashtaroth, although that is also true. He wasn't saying you cannot serve God and Buddha or whatever the Hindu gods are or Mohammed. He said you cannot serve God and wealth.

Why did Jesus draw this line between God and wealth? Those are the two things that are in competition with each other. Well, let's go back over that list again that wealth wants to offer you. And you'll find out that God wants to offer you every one of those same things.

Wealth comes along and says, I'm going to offer you a counterfeit. He doesn't say that it's a counterfeit. But listen to this again.

God wants to give you security. God wants to give you fulfillment. God wants to give you purpose.

He wants to give you influence. You know, God wants to give you influence. If you're a member of the kingdom of God, you know, there's also the kingdom of these worlds that are out there.

God wants us to influence those things. He said, be salt in this earth, be light in this world. You are the light of this world.

He wants us to influence this world. And he wants us to do it through his power, not through the worldly means. God says, I want you to do this, not by serving the God of materialism, but by serving me.

God can give us health. I mean, that's kind of a fleeting thing because we live in these mortal bodies. And we're all going to die sometime.

But God has healed the sick many, many times. Well, materialism comes along and says, look, if you just had enough money, you could buy the best health insurance in the world. And, you know, you could stay at least stay living longer.

Maybe even if you live long enough, science will discover where you can live eternally. Well, it's never happened yet. But, you know, God comes along.

He says, I do give you eternal life. You can live forever. And even while you're here, the power, you know, there's been many miracles through prayer and seeking God of deliverance, even from these physical things.

Again, it's temporary. Don't expect that because you serve God, you're going to live forever here in this body. I don't think we should want to.

But God can give us all these things that materialism is trying to offer us. Love, power. That's what God wants to give us.

You shall receive power after the Holy Ghost has come upon you. He wants to give us grace, which is another word for power. So the God of materialism offers us these counterfeits.

This God is called so many things. It's called the love of money. It's called covetousness.

A desire for more. More than I have right now. I need more than what I have.

It talks about people, they that will be rich. And what happens to them? Fall into temptation and a snare. It's called, you could call it discontentment.

He says, be content with what you have. Be content with food and raiment. These are the things that the God of materialism comes along and tries to replace.

He replaces them with discontentment. A desire to be rich. A covetousness.

A love of money. What's the effect of this God? If we follow it, we say, okay, this sounds like a pretty good God. Maybe I'll try at least to serve this God of materialism with part of my being.

This love of material things. What's the effect? Well, one of the things is, Jesus said, where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Our heart will follow our treasure.

If we lay up our treasure here on this earth, our heart will follow it. And that's different from a lot of times the way we translate that verse. We say it the other way around.

You ever hear that? A lot of people, you know, will say, well, where my heart is, that must be where my treasure is. You know, I try to find, I look into my heart. I try to figure out, is my heart here or is my heart here? But you know, your heart is so deceitful.

That's what the Bible says. Your heart's going to fool you. If you try to figure out where your heart is, you're probably not going to get a very accurate reading because your heart by nature is deceitful.

But Jesus said, if you look at your treasure, where are you investing your time, your money, your resources? That might give you a really good, accurate reading of where your heart is. And your heart can be here on earth or it can be in heaven. And Christ wants it to be in heaven.

What else happens when this God of materialism takes over our life? It blinds us to good investments. You know, I told you back when I worked for that company that there was two kinds of people. One would look at that retirement plan and they'd say, I don't care about today.

I only, I mean, I don't care about the future. I only care about today. We call them spenders.

They get their money, they spend. It's gone. There's another kind of people called investors, and they care about the future.

They say, I want to do something long term. I want to have something to show for all my effort. I want something, you know, I don't want to live only for today.

I want to live for the future. Those are called investors. One day, an investor came to Jesus.

This was not a man who spent everything, you know, as soon as he got it. He was an investor. He was looking long term.

We call him the rich young ruler because he was an investor. He should have known what a good investment was. He should have known how to tell the difference between a long term versus a short term investing.

But Jesus offered him treasures in heaven. Jesus said, sell your possessions, give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Now, to somebody who was already an investor, that should have jumped out at him as the opportunity of a lifetime.

He should have said, wow, really? I can lay up treasure in heaven? He says, I've been laying up treasure on this earth. But if I could lay up treasure in heaven, that would deal with the problem of, you know, I've been thinking lately that when I die, I'm going to lose everything. And what shall I do? And Jesus says, here's what you can do.

You can lay up treasure in heaven. But you know what? He had already sold out to the God of materialism and he was blind. His blinders were down.

And when Jesus come along and offered him a better investment than he'd ever heard of, the better than any piece of real estate could ever invest, better than any stock he could ever invest in, better than anything he had ever heard of, better than any foreign bank account or foreign currency. Jesus was offering him treasures in heaven and he missed it. He was blind.

Somehow he just flat blew it. He should have known. He was an investor after all.

He was not a spender. He was an investor. But somehow he missed it.

He missed the opportunity. And so many people today are missing that same opportunity. We live, probably everyone in this room, lives in the United States of America.

Americans have sold out to this God of materialism, hook, line and sinker. They have bought into this thing of whatever materialism is offering them. And they often abide by this rule.

Bigger is better. More assets is better than less assets. And along with more assets, what comes with it? A lot of times more debt.

And we see this in this financial crisis that just happened. As people kept growing bigger and bigger and more and more and borrow and borrow and spend and spend. You know, the hen finally came home to roost.

And suddenly payments started to have to be made and problems started happening. And over and over this happens until this whole financial crisis that has happened for the last two years. And I'm not sure where, I think I read today somewhere that unemployment is higher than it's ever been for the last, I don't know, 30 years.

It's getting close to 10% unemployment nationwide. Higher than that if you calculate it a different way. But this is the result of following this God of materialism.

He's so deceptive in everything that he wants to do. By the way, let me just talk about this a little bit. What if we are in that position of, you know, we heard a little bit about that tonight.

What if we're in that position of, as this financial crisis unfolds, I see so many people who have got in over their heads. And now it's not a problem of getting richer. Now it's a problem of all of a sudden their assets or their debt is more than their assets.

I've seen this over and over again. What happens if you're in that situation? Let me just, I'm taking a little rabbit trail here. But because there's more people, I suppose it's possible there's somebody right here that might be in that position right now.

What do you do? What can you do? I mean, obviously you can't just call your banker and say, hey, I just I don't believe in debt after all. And we're just gonna let this thing go away. That's not going to work.

But, you know, there's some advice in Proverbs that says the borrower is the servant to the lender. And you turn up to the New Testament talks about all the things that a servant should do. A servant should be obedient.

A servant should be a good servant. So if you find yourself in a position of being a servant today, choose to be the best servant you can be. Choose to be the make your payments on time as much as possible every single month.

Choose to, you know, if that's not possible, then call the banker. Don't just let them hang or whoever this is, be the best servant you can be. Be a testimony for Christ, even in this situation.

That's one thing you can do. Here's another thing. Give thanks for the situation you're in.

Give thanks. You know why you should give thanks? Because it just could be that this situation, God can bring more fruit from your life than He ever could with prosperity. Excuse me.

With prosperity or with the lack of debt. I mean, there's something about death that kind of has a humbling effect on us. You know that? I've experienced it, by the way.

Something about death that has a humbling effect on us. Well, you know what God says about the humble? He says He gives grace to the humble. So if we allow this situation, whatever the hard situation, maybe it's not debt, maybe it's a health problem, maybe it's family issues.

I don't know what your situation is. But if you're in a hard situation, let that thing humble you because God gives grace to your humble. And He might be able to do far more through you in this newfound humility.

Maybe it's brought on even by your own mistakes. But He might be able to do more through you as His grace flows through you. As you humble yourself under the hand of God and say, Lord, I accept this

situation.

And I'm going to do what I can to get out of it. But if I can't, then Lord, I'm going to simply be the best servant I can be. Be the best testimony I can be.

And live for you through it all. And in it all, Christ will be glorified. So let's get back here to this thing of Americans, you know, and how they bought into this whole God of materialism.

What's so amazing about this whole thing is that America, they've bought in more than any other country in history to this God of materialism. They have also, almost more than any other country, claimed to be a Christian nation. A nation that follows this man, Jesus Christ.

Here's the ironic thing. More than anything else, Christ tore down this God of materialism over and over and over again. So to claim to serve Christ and yet also be serving with everything they have, this materialism God, it's so inconsistent.

Maybe we could ask the question, why did they do that? Why this inconsistency? Why this vast discrepancy between claiming to be a follower of Christ, but yet with everything you see in the fruit of their lives, they're serving the God of materialism. Why is that? Well, I think there's a couple reasons, and I'll just mention two of them. Probably two of the most common ones.

Number one is, either they do not know what Jesus said. Or number two, they do not care what Jesus said. Either they don't know what Jesus said, or they just simply don't take it seriously.

What Jesus said about this God of materialism. What he really said about it. Here's my testimony.

With me, it was the first one. As I look back on my life and when I was into this God of materialism, I have to admit, I simply did not know the scripture. There were scriptures I did not know about.

I'm grateful to faithful brothers for pointing them out to me. And as I looked at those, I started wondering, what is it? God, what are you saying through these things? I never saw that before. I was never taught that before.

What's going on here, Lord? What am I missing? What have I missed? And I started to realize, yeah, there's some scripture. I can't form a right doctrine about this subject if I don't even know what Christ said. Once we all know what Christ said, maybe there's slightly different applications.

Maybe you're not going to do everything like I do, or I might not do everything like you do. But if we have that handicap of simply not knowing the scriptures, we've got a real handicap, don't we? Jesus told the Pharisees, you do err. It was the Sadducees.

You don't know the scriptures or the power of God. Not knowing the scriptures is a big problem. I do have something here that I'd like to hand out.

Is there any way you could pass these out? I think there's probably one for every adult, or at least close to it. So, if you don't mind just giving those. And what that is, go ahead.

It's simply a paper that I've put together that has all the, I don't want to say all of them, but many, many of the verses in the New Testament. It's just a one-page thing folded in half. Many of the verses in the New Testament about possessions and material wealth and money and what Jesus really taught about it.

Now, if you take that and look at them and look at these things, and if you do something different than I do with them, I don't feel so bad about that. But if you make decisions without even knowing what the scripture says, that's the thing that if there's anything I would love to accomplish this evening, is just get you on the path to getting familiar with what Christ said, with what God says, and then using that as a tool to make decisions in your own personal life. So, what was it that Christ said? What did He say about this false god of materialism? Here's one thing He said, He said, You cannot serve God and mammon, or God and money.

He said this, He said, Woe to you who are rich! You know Jesus said that? I didn't know. For many years, I didn't know Jesus said that. He said, Woe to you who are rich, Luke 6, verse 20.

Blessed are you who are poor, Luke 6, verse 24. Blessed are you who are poor. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

That which is highly esteemed among men, and He was talking about material wealth there, and the love of it. That which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the eyes of God. That's another thing Jesus said.

Hard words. Jesus didn't stop though, with just giving principles about it. You know what else He did? He gave commands about wealth.

By the way, did everybody get one? I've got one extra here if anybody is missing one. Maybe I should have said one for every couple. Maybe that would have worked better.

Anyway, let's hear if someone would like one. Jesus didn't stop with giving instruction about wealth and warning of the dangers about it. He also gave commands about it.

He gave things. He said, look, if you are my people, I'm going to give you some commands. And maybe you say, what does that mean? What about the commands of Christ? Do they apply to us? Well, listen to what He said about His commands, and then you can make a decision whether His commands are even important.

He said, first of all, if you love Me, keep My commands, or you will keep My commands. He said, you are My friends if you do what I command you. He said, why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and do not keep My commands? Do not do what I tell you.

John says, hereby do we know that we know Him if we keep His commands. And so, the commands of Christ are important. Let's look at some of His commands.

And it is there on your brochure if you want to follow along, but you don't have to. I'll read them loud enough, hopefully, for you to hear. But the first command is this one.

Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth. Or if you look at that in plain English, do not store up wealth on this earth. Do not make investments on this earth.

You know, this thing of making investments is a big question, and a lot of Christians have debated. They've said, what about making investments? Where is it right for a Christian to invest his money? And all my life, or at least all my working life, this whole thing of the stock market has kind of had a fascination with me. I've watched it to a certain extent.

I've even got into investing in it. You know, that was years ago. But you watch things.

But you ask questions. You know, wait, I'm a Christian now. Should I be doing this or shouldn't I? Some people say, no, absolutely not.

Stocks are wrong. Well, then you say, what is okay? And they come up with some other idea. They say, well, maybe you should put your money just into a bank and earn interest on it.

Or they say there's a difference between stocks and bonds. Stocks, you're an owner of the company. Bonds, you're simply loaning money to the company.

I think that's where the line is for Christians. Other people say, you know what? Some stocks are okay. There's these mutual funds that put together what they call financially responsible investing.

They take all these stocks that don't get into the military. They don't get into tobacco and they don't get into alcohol production. And they say, we're just going to weed out all those bad things and we're only going to invest in the good things.

And some Christians have said, you know what? As long as you just stay on the socially responsible type investment, then it's okay for a Christian. Other people said, you know what? The whole financial system is corrupt. I don't want any part of it.

I'm going to go take all my money, go out and dig a hole in my backyard. I'm going to bury it there and cover it over and I'm not going to tell anybody where my money is. That's my investment.

So these are different approaches people have taken in order to answer this question. Where do we as Christians, or where should we, invest our money? Well, I'm thankful that Jesus gave us an answer. He drew a line.

You know where he drew the line? Between heavenly treasure and earthly treasure. Don't invest your money for yourself here on this earth, but do invest your money for yourself in heaven. That was the line that Jesus drew.

As far as I can find, that's the only line he drew. These other lines that we come up with, Jesus didn't mention them. He didn't talk about the difference between socially responsible and non-socially responsible or stocks versus bonds.

He didn't get into that. The only line that he drew was heavenly treasure and earthly treasure. And he gives us very good reasons.

He says, by the way, if you don't think this, I've got some good reasons for telling you to invest in heaven. Back in those days when Jesus was alive, probably the people who wanted to preserve their wealth for the future, I don't know what all they invested in, but probably precious metals. Maybe they bought some expensive Babylonish garments and hung them up in their closet.

Maybe they took a bunch of gold coins with Caesar's inscription on them and tucked them away. Jesus said, there's a problem with all those earthly investments. You know what they are? Thieves, rust and moths.

Those clothes you have, the moth will come and eat them up and all that money you have invested, it's going to be gone. Sorry. All that money you have in your closet, it's going to come along.

Somebody could come along and steal it when you're not there. It's gone. It's simply a bad investment to invest here on this earth, Jesus says.

Rust will come along and ruin it. Today we have different things. I suppose we still have thieves and we still have moths and we still have rust.

But you know what? We've got some other things, too. We've got inflation. We've got financial crises.

We've got slumps in the housing market. We've got all kinds of problems today for those of us that decide we're going to invest on earth. So Jesus said, look, I'll give you something better.

You can invest your money, your extra resources after you've earned and you've paid your bills and you've been responsible and all that. You've got some extra money left over. What are you going to do with it? I'll tell you what to do with it.

That's safe from thieves. It's safe from rust. It's safe from moth.

It's safe from stock market corrections or even great depressions. It's safe from inflation. It's even safe from the communists coming in and taking over this country.

It's safe from all that. And that's called treasure in heaven. What a privilege.

What would happen? Do we really value this like we should? You know, what would happen if someone would come along to us and offer us one nugget of gold for every stone in your driveway? You know, your driveway where you park your car if you don't have a garage or if you can't fit it in the garage. That's your driveway. And there's stones on there unless you've paved it.

But most of us, you know, somebody come on and say, you know what? For every stone in there, I'll give you a nugget of gold. If I would turn to that man and say, I'm sorry, I really need that driveway. I'm not going to give you any of my stones because where would I park my car? Do you think something would be wrong with my value system? Do you think, sir, you don't really know how valuable gold is, do you? And that would be true.

It's the same way when Jesus offers us treasure in heaven for all this stuff on earth. When Jesus offers to make us that exchange and we say, no, thank you. Hey, I might have a medical bill sometime.

Hey, I might get old sometime. I got all these what ifs in my mind that I'm just not sure about. And do you think maybe we've missed it somehow? Maybe we don't quite realize how valuable treasure in heaven are.

I wonder if maybe that's the problem sometimes. We just don't quite value treasure in heaven like we should. If you look at Hebrews 11, you'll see a list of people there that Jesus calls, or that Paul calls, whoever wrote Hebrews calls, heroes of faith.

If you go down through that list, you find people that had a value system that was totally different than the people around them. They had a value system that was, you know, I want to say Abraham. He looked for a city that has foundations.

His builder and maker is God. And you read about Moses, esteeming the reproach of Christ, greater riches than all the riches, everything in Egypt. He had a value system that matched Christ's value system.

We're talking about the commands of Christ. The first one was lay not up treasure in heaven. The second one that Jesus gave that I want to point out to you, and it's in boldface here in the brochure, and that is in Luke 12, verse 33, where Jesus said, sell that ye have and give alms or sell your possessions and give to the poor.

I know when I would have heard this years ago, I would have heard this command. I said, no, wait a minute. Jesus is talking to the rich young ruler when he gave that command.

And maybe you thought the same thing. But the rich young ruler is not mentioned here in this chapter, Luke 12. I know he said that to the rich young ruler.

But in Luke 12, he's talking to his disciples. And later he told his disciples, you go and teach other people to obey or observe the things that I've commanded you. This is in Luke 12, verse 33.

If you want to look it up, do a study on it. And this is one of the verses that really caught me off guard, I guess, years ago when this was pointed out to me. And I looked at that verse and I didn't know that verse was in the Bible.

I didn't know it was there. I didn't know Jesus said that in that context. What am I supposed to do with a verse like that? Sell what you have and give alms.

And so that's a lot of the burden that I've had on this subject is simply that we don't know the Scripture. Let's learn the Scripture. Now again, maybe we're not going to ever do exactly just like our brother does.

But at least let's know what Jesus said. And one of the things he said was sell and give. Some of you might know that as this burden was unfolding in my mind, it started to come together and I actually wrote a little book on the subject through the eye of a needle.

By the way, I have some extra copies here if anybody would like them. I think it's back there on the bench I was sitting on. And I'll give them to you for free.

I don't have enough for everybody, but you're certainly welcome to take them until they are all gone. But after writing this book, it seemed to speak to a lot of people. A lot of people got a hold of this book and they wrote me letters saying, what should I do in this situation? What about this? I don't know.

I spoke to them. They were taking it seriously. They weren't just ignoring it.

And God laid a illustration in my heart that I've shared with a number of them that seemed to help. What do you do with some of these commands? What do you do with this command? Sell and give. And the illustration that came to my mind was the illustration of two different men and how they responded to the commands of Christ on possessions.

This is just a parable. This is not a true story. But these two men both had a house.

And both of these houses were right along the shore of a great ocean. Both of these houses were constructed very uniquely. They only had two windows in them.

One window looked out across the ocean. The other window looked down into the basement of their house where all their earthly possessions were stored. So both of these men went home after reading Luke 12, 33.

Maybe they even read a copy of my book. However, they found out that some of these commands are in the Bible and they want to keep the commands. They went home.

And walked into their house. And here's what happened. The first man walked into his house.

He immediately goes to the window peering down into the basement. He peers down there and looks at all his stuff. And he's struggling like many people struggle.

You know, what do I do now? I mean, he's got quite a bit of stuff down there. You know, after all, he lives in America like most of us do. And so he looks down there and just, what do I do? Lord, I don't know what to do with some of these words.

I don't know what to do with some of these commands. And so it bothers me. He looks down there into the basement and he sees all his possessions.

He finally announces to his wife, Honey, I think we have too many possessions. And he reaches down, grabs a handful of money, hands it to his wife and says, Go get rid of it somewhere. Go give it away.

She says, Where do you want me to give it, husband? He says, I don't care. Just go get rid of it. We can't have it down in our basement anymore.

She goes and does something with it. He peers down there some more and he says, You know what? I think we still have too many possessions. And so he reaches down, grabs another handful, hands it to his wife and says, Go get rid of it.

She says, Where? I don't care. Just go get rid of it. And he goes to bed that night.

He can't sleep. He's worried about, Do I still have too many possessions? Is God not happy with the way I'm handling these things? That's for one hour. The next hour, he's worried.

Maybe I gave away too much stuff. What am I going to do when I get old? What am I going to do if I have a heart attack and I have a hospital bill? What am I going to do? And he can't sleep at night. He's not happy.

He lays awake all night long, worrying about how to put these principles into practice. But here's another man, the second man. He goes home and he walks into his house.

And instead of going to the basement window, he walks over to the ocean window. He picks up a pair of binoculars and looks out across the ocean and says, Honey, look at all these opportunities. There's people over here that are hungry, that need food.

Let's send them some money. She hands him some money from the basement and he sends it over there to feed those hungry people. He says, Over here is a group of people that would like to have the word of God and they need Bibles, but they have no money to buy the Bible.

Let's send them some Bibles. And she hands him some more money. And he sends the money over to the Bible, the need for Bibles.

He keeps on looking through the binoculars and he sees a group of pastors that would just love to be sent out and supported so they could preach the gospel full time. And he sends some money to them. He sees another group of people that are lacking proper water.

No clean water, no medicine. He says, Honey, there's so much opportunity. Let's send some money.

And this keeps on going. And he's getting more and more excited about all the doors of opportunity that God has suddenly opened to him through these verses. And finally his wife says, Honey, the money is all gone.

There's no more money in the basement. He says, Well, then let's sell something. Because there's still so much opportunity.

There's still so much opportunity to lay up treasure in heaven. There's still so many needs. And this man, you know, he goes to bed that night.

He's so excited. His mind is full of visions of people who are eating that would otherwise go to bed hungry. People who have medicine that would otherwise go to bed sick.

People who, you know, the orphans that are being taken care of. People who have the Word of God in their language that wouldn't have had it except for him and his generosity. People who have the gospel being preached to them because of what he has done.

You know, those are two approaches to what Jesus said. Two different approaches, two very different approaches to respond to these commands that Jesus has given us. And my question to you is when you open this brochure or open your Bible and read these verses, don't lay up treasures on earth, but lay up treasures in heaven.

Did your mind go to your basement window with all the possessions? Or did your mind go to the ocean window with all the wonderful, wonderful opportunities? You know, if your mind went to the ocean window, I can guarantee you'll have a much more enjoyable time putting these things into practice than if your mind and your focus is on the basement window. The Bible says, set your affection on things above. It says, lift up your eyes and look on the fields for they are white, all ready to harvest.

So that's where our focus should be in all this. You say, well, how do I do this? How do I change my focus? Because I feel like my focus is right here. Let me give you just one tiny little step that you can do to help change your focus.

It won't do it by itself. It's going to take the grace of God. But one thing you can do is subscribe to the newsletters of these organizations that are caring for the hungry, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick.

There's many of them. So much opportunity. These people that are sending out Bibles and Gospel tracts around the world, get on the mailing list of these newsletters and you get these things in the mail.

You open them up and maybe you can give. Maybe you don't have any money to give. You can at least pray.

Either way, here's what happens. Your mind, your affections, they get transferred to the heavenly instead of to the earthly. Your heart gets moved.

So that's just one little step that you can do. What are some other steps? What else should we do in response to this? I mentioned the thing, what if we end up in that situation of having too much debt? Well, there's a couple things you can do. Number one, give thanks to God for it because maybe He can work in that situation in a way that He couldn't have otherwise.

Here's one thing you can do. Practice contentment. Learn to be content right where you're at.

Look for opportunities to give. That's another one. Look for opportunities.

Explore them. Find out which ones of these organizations are doing something good. Are they just spending it on their own operation? Or are they really taking it to the mission field? Maybe if you're in a position right now, you say giving has not been a part of my life at all.

Well, let me tell you one other small step. If you have any income at all, for sure, start with a tithe. Now, I know the tithe is found in the Old Testament, but if we're in the New Testament, let's at least get up to the Old Testament standard.

I think we should try to be beyond that. But at least let's start with the tithe. I believe God will bless you if that's where you're at.

Start with 10% and give that away before you pay any of your other bills. I believe God will bless you for it. Learn to sacrifice.

You know, that story of the widow and her two mites? It almost seems to tell us that God looks more at what is left over. He says to that widow, you've given more than all those rich men because you had nothing left over. It almost seems as though God looks more at how much is left over than what He looks at how much is actually given.

Learn to work hard. Remember the problem of laziness? Don't let laziness come in and choke out this fruit in your life, this fruit of laying up treasure in heaven. Learn to give sooner rather than later.

You know, we can tell ourselves, look, if I just keep this for a while and keep it here, maybe later I'll be able to give even more than I could right now. Well, there could be some truth to that. But let me just give you a general principle.

If you have an opportunity to give today, give today. Tomorrow, the opportunity might not be there. Teach your children to give.

That's a good one for this weekend. We're talking about homes. Learn to trust in God.

Otto Koenig was preaching at a place and a lady comes up to him afterwards and says, I've got a problem, Brother Otto. God is not supplying my needs. He looks at her and says, well, God hasn't promised to supply your needs.

She says, well, yes, He has. Philippians 4.19 says, My God shall supply all your needs. But he says, well, lady, that verse was written to the Philippians.

And the Philippians were people who had... they were givers. They had laid up much treasure in heaven. The promise was to them.

And maybe you could argue with the theology there a little bit, but the principle is the same. God shall supply all your needs. What's the rest of the verse? According to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

And Jesus said, if you do these things, if you don't lay up treasure on earth, but lay up treasure and have all these things, it will be added unto you. I don't know if I can sit here and give you numbers. I don't think I can.

I can't give you, hey, here's exactly the dollar amounts and this and that. How big is your savings account or your checking account or this or that. I can't lay everything out for you in your personal life.

But I can hopefully change your paradigm of thinking. You know, the world thinks I need to have a savings account in case of a medical bill. Should a Christian have a savings account in case of a medical bill? Absolutely.

I think we should have the biggest savings account. But what's the question? Should it be here on earth or in heaven? Should a Christian have a retirement account for the old age? Absolutely. You should have the biggest retirement accounts of anyone.

But where's your retirement account going to be? Is it going to be on earth or is it going to be in heaven? You see how this changes our whole thinking? What about the rainy day fund that we talk about? Again, I'm not trying to be legalistic here, but let's just stretch our thinking a little bit. You know, this rainy day fund, it's supposed to be good management. I agree.

I mean, it's one of these things, you know, you set aside money because, hey, I might lose my job. This might happen. This might happen.

I might get laid off from work for a few weeks or whatever. So I have this rainy day fund. Have as big a rainy day fund as you can possibly have.

But where are you going to keep that rainy day fund? Are you going to keep it on earth or are you going to keep it in heaven? Do you really believe it's there? If you lay up church in heaven, do you really believe it's just as much there as putting it in a savings account down at the local bank? Jesus wants our paradigm to change. He wants our whole thought process to change. Do we think of that as being really there? When we were first... One story in closing here.

When we were first, when God was doing a work in our heart about this subject, we wanted to communicate this to our children. And we started teaching our children about giving and how we can lay up treasure in heaven and the power of it and everything that goes with it. And, you know, we get these brochures in the mail of opportunities of how you can send money for Bibles over in China and how powerful those Bibles were.

Those Bibles that go over there and where people are sharing them. One Bible for ten... Somebody was estimating that for every Bible that goes into China during the current revival, up to ten people were getting saved. What an investment.

Well, we were trying to teach this to our oldest daughter years ago. She was probably six or eight years old. She had some money.

I don't remember if it was from a birthday or what it was, but she had some money and she wanted a swimming pool. It was a hot summer and she wanted this little wading pool. I think it was going to cost her \$11.

And as we were talking about these Bibles, she started to think about the possibility that she could give some of these Bibles to this country. But she knew she had to make a choice. She had to make a choice either between the swimming pool or sending these Bibles.

And we tried to leave it up to her. And she fought and she wrestled and she agonized over this decision. She wanted a swimming pool really bad, but she also wanted to give these Bibles to China.

And she finally agonized through it and finally she made the decision. Okay, I'm going to send these Bibles to China. So she gets the envelope.

She puts the money in the envelope. She puts a stamp on it. She fills out the little coupon.

And she carries it out to the mailbox, puts the flag up, shuts the mailbox, and starts walking back down the lane. On her way out to the mailbox, she was kind of slow. She wasn't sure about this, but she had finally made the decision.

Well, on the way, as soon as she left that mailbox, as she was walking back in the driveway, something happened that I've never seen before or since in my daughter. She started jumping up and down with excitement that I've never seen joy. She says, Daddy, I'm so excited.

I've never been this happy in all my life after sending this money to Bibles for China. I think, here's my opinion, I think it was a supernatural joy that came over her. I think it's that supernatural joy that Christ gives when we give up ourselves and our desires for His kingdom.

And you know that joy can be yours. That joy can be yours tonight when you give up yourself and your things and for Him and His things. And that's what I want to leave you with.

That all these blessings, and they are blessings. This is good news. This is not bad news.

You carry this brochure around. Hey, every verse in there is absolutely good news. And I just want to leave you with that.

And I want to thank you very much for your patience. Thank you very much for listening tonight. God bless you all.

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